

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PINT, MILL, MOPS, LE, IS, SY, JU

SUBJECT: IITUATION IN BEIRUT

REF: (A) STATE 203302 (NOTAOBLN) (B) STATE 200854.

SUMMARY: DURING DISCUSSION AUGUST 12 WITH KUWAITI FOREIGN
MINISTER I UNDERLINED SERIOUS US CONCERN OVER DEVELOPMENTS IN

ZBANON, ESPECIALLY HEAVY ADF SHELLING IN BEIRUT, AND REPORTED
OUR EFFORTS MG RESTRAIN ALL PARTIES INVOLVED. FOREIGN MINISTER
REFERRED TO HIS JULY OFFER TO SARKIS TO TRY TO ORGANIZE MINI-
UMMIT AND LATTER'S LACK OF REACTION. MINISTER BELIEVED

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SITUATION IN LEBANON HAD NOW CHANGED AND SUCH A MEETING COULD
PROBABLY HAVE NO RPT NO USEFUL RESULT SINCE PROBLEM IS BASICALLY
INTERNAL AND SOLUTION MUST COME FROM WITHIN LEBANON. END SUMMARY

1. I MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER SABAH AL-AHMAD AL-SABAH ON
AUGUST 12. I HAD REQUESTED THIYVMEETING IN RESPONSE TO
INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED IN REF B. ALTHOUGH THEY WERE SUBSE-

QUENTLY SUSPENDED BY REF A, I DID NOT SEE THE NEED FOR CANCELING THIS MEETING, WHICH WAS TO BE THE FIRST WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER AFTER MY RETURN FROM LEAVE, BECAUSE I BELIEVED AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH HIM WOULD BE USEFUL AT THIS TIME.

2. AFTER THE FOREIGN MINISTER WELCOMED ME BACK FROM LEAVE, I TOLD HIM OF OUR INCREASING CONCERN ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON. I ASSURED HIM WE SHARED THE SAME AIM OF THE ARAB NATIONS TO ENSURE INDEPENDENCE, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND UNITY OF LEBANON AND STRESSED THAT OUR POSITION WAS OPPOSED TO ANY PARTITION OF THAT COUNTRY. IN FACT, I BELIEVED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN LEBANON TO REMAIN AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ARAB WORLD. I TOLD SABAH AL-AHMAD THAT, CONTRARY TO WHAT SOME KUWAITI NEWSPAPERS WERE WRITING, THE US IS NOT SUPPORTING THE MARONITE MILITIAS NOR WERE WE ENCOURAGING ISRAELI SUPPORT OF THESE MILITIAS. AS WE HAD URGED SYRIA TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN ITS ROLE IN THE ADF, THE US HAD ALSO DONE ITS BEST TO RESTRAIN THE CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS AND THE ISRAELIS. THE TENTATIVE CEASE-FIRE IN BEIRUT WAS VERY ENCOURAGING, ALTHOUGH RADIO REPORTS OF NEW EXCHANGES OF FIRE WERE DISQUIETING. IT WAS OUR HOPE THAT THIS WOULD NOT LEAD TO A WORSENING CYCLE OF VIOLENCE.

3. I WISHED TO ASSURE THE FOREIGN MINISTER WE HAD MADE MAJOR EFFORTS WITH ISRAELIS, PARTICULARLY DURING SECRETARY VANCE'S VISIT, TO DISCOURAGE ANY ISRAELI ACTION WHICH WOULD
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EXACERBATE THE LEBANON SITUATION. WE HAVE CONTINUED TO REMAIN IN TOUCH WITH THE TOP ISRAELI LEADERS ON THIS QUESTION. HE COULD BE ASSURED THAT WE WOULD MAKE RENEWED EFFORTS WITH THE CHRISTIANS, BUT I NOTED THAT THE RECENT HEAVY RETALIATORY SHELLING BY THE ADF, SEEMINGLY DISPROPORTIONATE TO THE PROVOCATIONS BY THE CHRISTIANS, HAD RAISED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN IN MANY QUARTERS. WE WERE AFRAID THAT THESE RETALIATORY ACTIONS WERE COSTING SYRIA MANY FRIENDS AND LEADING TOWARD A GREATER POLARIZATION OF THE ENTIRE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN LEBANON. THE TENTATIVE CEASE-FIRE WAS WELCOME, BUT ANY RESUMPTION OF HEAVY FIGHTING WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO ENCOURAGE RESTRAINT ON THE CHRISTIANS AND, FOR THAT MATTER, ON THE ISRAELIS. I EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT SOME SORT OF SEPARATION BETWEEN THE ADF AND THE CHRISTIAN FORCES, WHICH I UNDERSTOOD WAS TAKING PLACE, COULD BE EFFECTIVE AND THUS REDUCE THE DIRECT CONFRONTATION IN BEIRUT. HOPEFULLY, THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES COULD ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR PATROLLING IN BETWEEN THE TWO FORCES.

4. I THEN QUERIED THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON THE INITIATIVE WHICH I HAD UNDERSTOOD HE HAD UNDERTAKEN IN JULY TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF HOLDING A MINI-SUMMIT WITH THOSE

ARAB COUNTRIES MOST CONCERNED WITH THE LEBANESE SITUATION.
I TOLD HIM I HAD NOT HEARD WHAT THE RESULTS OF HIS SOUNDINGS
WERE.

5. THE FOREIGN MINISTER EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE
INFORMATION I HAD PROVIDED IN MY PRESENTATION AND FOR THE US
ACTIONS WHICH HAD BEEN UNDERTAKEN TO TRY TO CALM THE LEBANESE
SITUATION. HE DECLARED HE DID NOT SEE THE ADF ACTIONS AS
DIRECTED AGAINST CHRISTIANS BUT RATHER AS DEFENSIVE IN NATURE.
SABAH AL-AHMAD REJECTED MY IMPLICATION OF SYRIAN HEAVYHANDEDNESS
IN THE SHELLING OF BEIRUT AND INSISTED THE ADF HAD THE RIGHT
TO DEFEND ITSELF. MOREOVER, HE WAS CONVINCED THAT GEMAYAL
AND CHAMOUN DID NOT ENJOY SUPPORT OF THE MAJORITY OF CHRISTIANS
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THEIR MILITANT ACTIONS. HE FURTHER STRESSED THAT THE ADF
WAS OPERATING IN LEBANON UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE LEBANESE
GOVERNMENT. IF THAT GOVERNMENT WISHED TO HAVE THEM REMOVED,

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EXDIS

KUWAIT, AS A MAJMR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE FINANCING OF THAT FORCE, WOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEDE TO THEIR REQUEST.

6. SABAH AL-AHMAD THEN MADE REFERENCE TO HIS JULY VISIT TO BEIRUT AND STATED THAT HE HAD TOLD PRESIDENT SARKIS HE WAS READY TO TRY TO ORGANIZE A MINI-SUMMIT ON LEBANON IF THE PRESIDENT SO DESIRED. THE FOREIGN MINISTER DECLARED THAT SARKIS DID NOT ASK FOR SUCH A MEETING NOR COULD HE FORCE SUCH A MEETING UPON HIM. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE RECENT CHANGES IN THE SITUATION BOTH WITH REFERENCE TO THE BORDER AND INTERNALLY, HE BELIEVED THAT, EVEN IF SARKIS ASKED FOR SUCH A MEETING, IT WOULD BE TOO LATE TO HOLD IT. HE SAW THE DIFFICULTIES IN LEBANON AS PRIMARILY INTERNALLY BASED AND WAS SECRET

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CONVINCED THEY COULD ONLY BE RESOLVED BY AGREEMENT AMONG THE VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS. SABAH AL-AHMAD DID ADMIT THAT OUTSIDE CONTRIBUTIONS EXACERBATED THE SITUATION, NOTING THAT IRAQ AND LIBIA WERE REPORTED TO BE SPENDING 12-MILLION AND 6-MILLION LEBANESE LIRAS, RESPECTIVELY, IN THAT COUNTRY MONTHLY. FOREIGN MINISTER ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE PALESTINIANS HAD KEPT FROM BECOMING INVOLVED IN THIS INTERNAL LEBANESE STRUGGLE. THEREFORE, IN HIS VIEW, THE SOLUTION MUST COME FROM THE LEBANESE THEMSELVES.

6. THE FOREIGN MINISTER CONCLUDED HIS COMMENTS BY SAYING IF THERE WERE SOMETHING KUWAIT COULD DO, IT WOULD BE WILLING TO DO IT. HE APPRECIATED US WILLINGNESS TO HELP IN THIS RESPECT AND CALLED UPON THE USG TO BRING STRONGER PRESSURE ON ISRAEL TO STOP ARMING THE CHRISTIANS. HE ASKED THAT I CONVEY THIS REQUEST TO MY GOVERNMENT.

7. I RESPONDED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S COMMENTS BY SUGGESTING THAT THE US AND KUWAIT CLEARLY SHARED THE SAME OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON. I REASSURED HIM THAT WE WERE MAKING STRENUOUS EFFORTS ON ALL SIDES TO COUNSEL RESTRAINT AND THAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO RETURN TO PEACE AND STABILITY IN LEBANON.

8. COMMENT: APPARENTLY, SUBSEQUENT TO HIS JULY OFFER TO ORGANIZE A MINI-SUMMIT ON LEBANON, SABAH AL-AHMAD SEEMS TO HAVE BECOME CONVINCED THAT THERE IS REALLY NOT MUCH THE ARABS OUTSIDE LEBANON CAN DO. IN LINE WITH REF A, I DID NOT SUGGEST THE POSSIBILITY OF THE ARABS ORGANIZING SUCH A MINI-SUMMIT, BUT SABAH AL-AHMAD'S REMARKS CLEARLY LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE GOK BELIEVES SUCH A MEETING COULD NOT

ACHIEVE ANY USEFUL RESULTS.

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